ELECTRUM * Vol. 9
Kraków 2003

Anna Maria Wasyl

POET'S FREEDOM AND ITS BOUNDARIES
LITERARY PATRONAGE IN THE EYES OF ROMAN AUTHORS OF LATE REPUBLICAN AND AUGUSTAN PERIOD

I will start as if *in medias res* by quoting a passage from Horace, *Epistles* 1.1.1–12:

> Prima dicte mihi, summa dicende camena,
> spectatum satis et donatum iam rude quaeris,
> Maecenas, iterum antiquo me includere ludo.
> non eadem est aetas, non mens. Veianius armis
> Herculis ad postem fixis latet abditus agro,
> ne populum extrema totiens exoret harena.
> est mihi purgatam crebro qui personet aurem
> 'solve senescentem mature sanus equum, ne
> peccet ad extremum ridendus et ilia ducat'.
> nunc itaque et versus et cetera ludicra pono;
> quid verum atque decens, curo et rogo et omnis in hoc sum;
> condo et compono, quae mox depromere possim.

This opening is what we call a *recusatio*. Horace declines the *iussa* of his patron, Maecenas, who wants him to continue composing lyric poetry. Horace, however, after publishing three books of *Carmina* patronized by Maecenas (therefore: 'prima dicte mihi, summa dicende camena', l. 1), feels like opening a new chapter in his life, and he finds such suggestions inadequate, if not intrusive.

The situation as described by the poet seems quite credible, so we could easily take it at face value, considering what we know (or maybe rather what we presume we know) about the relationship between Horace and Maecenas. As a matter of fact, we have no grounds for thinking that the poet's statement is wholly and purposely false and does not refer to any external factor at all. Quite on the contrary, it is highly probable that Maecenas could have given to Horace some guidance on what kind of poetry he should write and, being pleased with the *Odes*, encouraged him to 'steer the same course'. This declaration though must be

read in its primary context, which is literary, not historical. Horace, now (it is, say, 20 B.C.[1]) indeed generally identified with his *Odes*, wants to present to his reading public (who possibly, like Maecenas, would expect more lyric from him) his new book of poetry of a completely different nature: hexametric verse epistles where he will discuss philosophy of life. Thus, what Horace is doing in this passage is defining his new literary project; and he is defining it firstly by negation: "I will not write this or that", just like he did in his earlier texts where he described some characteristics of his lyric verses (in *Carm.* 1.6 and *Carm.* 2.1).

Therefore, Maecenas, as mentioned in l. 3 ff., who is still the addressee of this new collection (and so is still supposed to patronize Horace's writing), is not only a living person but also (if not mainly) a literary theme; he somewhat epitomizes and stands for Horace's lyric poetry, and it is the demands of lyric poetry that Horace declines much more than Maecenas' *iussa*.[2]

One more of Horace's *recusationes* which I would like to refer to here is to be found in the final part of *Epistles* 2.1, ll. 250–270. Horace refuses to write an epic on Augustus' deeds. The theme seems almost a classic. We might again quote *Carm.* 1.6 to Agrippa or *Carm.* 2.1 to Pollio. I focus on this text as it is one of the very few in Latin literature the origins of which we may reconstruct with some probability confronting it with some information offered by another source. Suetonius in his *Vita Horatii* quotes a passage from a letter that Augustus addressed to Horace after reading his *Epistles* 1:

> Irasci me tibi scito, quod non in plerisque eius modi scriptis mecum potissimum loquaris; an vereris ne apud posteros infame tibi sit, quod videaris familiaris nobis esse?[3]

Augustus, as it seems, has become quite fond of this new collection by the poet and he clearly asks for another one of pretty much the same style, this time addressed to him. He does not though prescribe the theme nor does he hint at all that he would be pleased if Horace composed something celebrating his exploits.[4] The initiative to put this issue in the *Epistle* was Horatian, not Augustan.

These two passages I have shortly analyzed above, one in the textual and the other in the extra-textual perspective, exemplify quite well the core of the problem we have to face dealing with the question of the literary patronage in Rome. We quite naturally tend to approach this subject with a certain assumption that the prefatory passages, and in particular the *recusationes* where the motif of the 'order' and the 'refusal' appears, must hide, or

[1] Horace composed *Epistles* 1 immediately after publishing *Carmina* 1–3, between 23 and 20 B.C. They were published in 20 B.C.

[2] Gold (1987: 3–4) remarks that "When Propertius or Virgil speak of *iussa*, "orders", they do not mean that Maecenas gave them explicit orders to follow. If they are indeed referring to any external factor at all here (and it is not clear that the putative *iussa* were not manufactured by the poets themselves), they must perhaps mean only that Maecenas gave them general guidance on what kind of poetry might be appropriate to the situation and the people who mattered, or simply encouragement to write what best suited them."

[3] Cugusi 1979: 350–351 cap. 65.

[4] White (1993: 114) argues that "Although Augustus certainly asked for a poem, the circumstances of this request make it unlikely that he also prescribed the theme or direction of the poem. He was reacting to the success of a literary initiative by Horace, whose *Epistles* established a new direction in poetry and at the same time were uniquely suited to put his friends on display. Augustus wanted to be identified with that success."

maybe rather allude to, some tensions that must have grown, at least sometimes, in the relationships between the authors and those who supported them somehow. We find it somewhat difficult to believe that patrons would have shown benevolence to their protégées without expecting anything in return.

However, we must be aware that what we read in poetic texts is a highly conventional motif, not a stenographic report of the poet's conversation with his benefactor. Besides, such statements are not private utterances but rather elaborated formulas aimed to influence the general reader as well as the particular addressee mentioned in the opening lines. The author's main goal is thus to display his very self in a favorable light in the eyes of both.[5] In other words, we know only what he wanted us to know and we see the situation precisely as he wanted us to see it.

Therefore, even if we presume that poetic *recusationes* may reflect or refer to a real situation, which is not impossible in general, we must bear in mind that this kind of source can hardly supply objective information on what the phenomenon of the Roman literary patronage looked like. On the other hand, what the *recusationes* do reveal and prove is that patrons indeed 'penetrate' the very core of poetry in a metaphorical sense: they simply provide material for verse. It is this particular aspect that I would like to focus on in the second part of my essay discussing the question of patronage, or more accurately of the relationships between poets and those on whom their success may depend, precisely as a subject matter in itself, as a literary theme adopted and elaborated by poets. Rather than giving just a general outline, I have decided to treat in detail three particular, but very exemplary, cases: Catullus, Horace, and Ovid.

However, to avoid misapprehensions, it is essential to see the problem in its proper dimension, i.e. with the Roman (and not ours) notion of what the literary patronage is in mind. To grasp it, some facts must be elucidated, on which I will concentrate now.

As it is today generally recognized (of immeasurable value for any student of the problem are essays and books by Peter White (1978; 1993) and Barbara Gold (1987), quoted extensively also in this paper), from the Roman perspective the relationships between poets and their prominent friends (the patrons, as we tend to call them) presumably did not look like a separate social and cultural phenomenon at all.[6] Rather, they were perceived just as a part of a whole complex of social relations that all included personal bonds of various kinds.[7] Considering the hierarchical character of the Roman society, the persons involved in such ties rarely could be and rarely considered themselves as peers.[8] Nevertheless, the term used normally to denote these relationships was *amicitia* and the two parties to the relationship were called *amici*, no matter if they were equal or not in standing. The term that we ordinarily use speaking of patronage, especially of the literary one, namely: *patronus* or *patrocinium*, never occurs in this context in Latin texts.[9] Even when distinctions of rank

[5] See White 1993: 68.

[6] See White 1978: 74–92.

[7] The same refers to ancient economy and politics, based by nature on personal connections, see Finley 1973.

[8] White (1993: 29) postulates that "From a Roman perspective the relationships between poets and their prominent friends looked no different from a mass of other relationships in upper-class society which presented subtly compounded elements of parity and inequality."

[9] See Saller 1982: 8–11 who points out that the term *patronus* is restricted to denote the man who has manumitted a slave, the formally designated sponsor of a town or corporation, or a lawyer who has

were to be pressed somehow, Latin writers still preferred to speak of the respective parties as *amici* and simply added a qualifying adjective: the superior friends were named: *dives amicus*, *locuples amicus*, *potens amicus*, *magnus amicus*, the inferior ones: *amici minores*, *amici pauperes*, *tenuiores amici*, *humiles amici*, *mediocris / modicus amicus*.[10] Nothing different can be said about the formulas which poets and patrons employ in their discourse with one another. Poets were *amici*, like anybody else.[11] Typical of other kinds of relationships all termed by the Romans as *amicitia* are also words of which the poets made use when expressing their gratitude or devotion to their *potentes amici*: *officium*, *meritum*, *gratia*. We find the same language, usually defined today as 'the language of *amicitia*', in political writings, in historiography etc.[12]

The second point that requires some explanation here concerns the very essence of the relationship between a poet and his patron (or rather his prominent friend, as I have just argued): what were the reasons for which poets attached themselves to great houses, in other words: what exactly did they expect from their '*potentes amici*'.

For a modern writer it would be axiomatic that material benefits must have been the most important need and the most important objective. In Rome, however, (unlike in Greece) there was a stigma attached to paid labor, any paid labor, including the writing of poetry.[13] Poets were not able to accept payment without admitting inferiority to the giver. If poets obtained any gifts from their prominent friends, which they did, these gifts were precisely the sort of presents that Roman friends typically exchanged under the polite code of *amicitia*. These gifts were exchanged on occasions, like holidays (*Saturnalia*, *Caristia*, *Rosalia* etc.), and for the most part they were not expected to be very large. Thus, they are not to be regarded as income or payment accruing from the poems they produced for society friends. Their significance was rather that they established the status of the recipients as *amici* of the donors. The same though refers to the rewards of a somewhat higher caliber, like gifts of property (Horace's Sabinum may be the case), temporary appointments in the army or on the staff of officials who were going out to serve in the provinces (like Catullus' journey to Bithynia), arrangements of marriages (like, probably, Ovid's third marriage) .[14] The only difference would be that this kind of presents, as more visible than apples or nuts exchanged on Saturnalia, all the more could have been interpreted as testimonials of the connection labeled as *amicitia*.

As a matter of fact, the *amicitia* with a prominent friend, especially if it was sealed by a gift of a more durable nature, and a gift that could not easily be overlooked (like

undertaken a defense. As White 1978: 79–80 notices, the word does not denote the man who maintains a circle of friends and dependants. Saller 1982: 9 argues that the reason for the infrequent appearance of *patronus* and *cliens* in literature lies in the social inferiority and degradation implied by the words.

[10] Saller 1982: 11 interprets the fact that terms like *amicitiae inferiores* or *amicitiae minores* were used as a proof that a new grade in the hierarchy was added to describe relationships with various *amici*. He emphasizes that the tendency to call men *amici* rather than the demeaning *clientes* did not produce any leveling effect or egalitarian ideology in the hierarchical Roman society. Therefore he disagrees with some conclusions of White.

[11] See White 1978: 80–82.

[12] See Saller 1982: 8 and the bibliography he refers to in n. 4.

[13] Gold 1987: 8.

[14] See White 1978: 87 ff & 90–92, where he provides a detailed list of the possible rewards a poet could expect from his society friend.

a donation or an arrangement of marriage), was a value per se for the poets no less than for other members of the society. In the Roman taxonomy of public gestures such a benefit was seen as a sign of the intimacy of the relationship or / and of high-esteem. In a society that was so conservative and hierarchical as the Roman, the approbation by a social superior did matter. It is not surprising then that poets so often emphasize the solidity and steadiness of the position to which their great friends have helped them (by calling them their *praesidium*, *tutela*, *arx*, *columen*).[15]

Poets on their part were not only the recipients of their friends' benevolence. They did fully participate in the give and take of friendly intercourse. The most precious gift that a poet could offer to 'his' grandee, however immaterial, was obviously a verse that would somehow bring attention and fame to the person celebrated in it. This does not necessarily mean that writers were always obliged to write on pre-determined topics, in praise of their patrons, commemorating their exploits alone or some other glorious attributes. At least for some enlightened patrons (like, I believe, Augustus was) this seems not have been the goal. A charming dedication would probably have sufficed.[16] What really mattered was the quality of the verse itself.

Consequently, the interpretation of the relationships between the Roman authors and their literary patrons in terms of clear-cut 'dependence' (which might give grounds for further inquiries regarding how 'free' the poets were in such ties or even some sympathetic assumptions that they were 'hardly if not free at all') is in many aspects very imprecise, or even simply inappropriate. As a matter of fact, the very title of my paper is purposely tinged with some simplistic flavor, the goal of which is precisely to emphasize how easily could we jump to conclusions in our research in the ancient culture. Of certain kind of dependence we may speak in the case of some poets of the Archaic period, who were slaves or *libertini*, like Livius Andronicus, Caecilius, and Terence, and thus indeed legally bound to their benefactors (as their formal *clientes*), or freemen, but foreigners, and non-citizens, like Naevius, Ennius, and Pacuvius, who needed citizenship and a place in society, and, presumably, did need material support.[17]

However, in the case of the poets who themselves belonged to the Roman upper classes and to the financial elite (and it is significant that with time poetry becomes a respectable

[15] White 1993: 17–18.

[16] Gold (1987: 2–4) remarks that "The patron-client system, as the Greeks and Romans knew it, was based on the notion of reciprocity: gifts were given by the patron and duties performed in return by the client. ... Once a gift was given, the recipient was put under immediate obligation and could not renege ... Gift giving, then, was crucial to the patronage system in Greece and Rome; however the nature of these gifts varied widely. ... One of the most important gifts given by client to a patron, the gift often regarded as most superior ... was a poem or work written in praise of a patron. ... The ultimate compliment to the patron lay not in writing a work celebrating his exploits alone or in stating explicitly his glorious attributes, but in writing a memorable poem that might bring attention and fame to the person celebrated in it." On the other hand, it is almost certain that in the period I have focused on there were also public figures whose major objective was self-advertisement, who treated poetry they supported as a simple means to achieve this goal, and so required compositions that would magnify their importance before contemporaries and, if possible, the future generations too. It may be significant though that, as Zetzel 1982: 90 points out, little if any of the production of this caliber survives. Williams 1982: 10 argues that in the Late Republic Greeks took over the role of poets writing texts of political advantage to prominent Romans (he gives the example of Archias thoroughly analyzed also by Gold 1987: 73–86).

[17] See Gold 1987: 42 ff.

activity for the Romans of the equestrian or senatorial status, even, for certain personages it becomes a way of life, not just a pastime) their *amicitiae* with prominent figures must have been of completely different nature than those of Livius Andronicus or even Ennius. Lucilius is an excellent example here. Lucilius certainly did not need a patron for support. He had many prominent friends, like Scipio Aemilianus and Gaius Laelius, whom he used mainly as a vehicle for his satiric observations on Roman society.[18] The new kind of poetry he invented, *sermo*, with its strong autobiographical and personal mode needed names that would inject a certain intimacy into it.[19] This particular tinge of familiarity was necessary for Lucilius' poetry as his audience were the very same people, gentlemen of high rank, au fait with all rumors about other members of the upper class and somewhat fond of such material.[20]

Catullus was also hardly dependent on a *potens amicus* for money and place in society. However an outsider in Rome, he was a descendant of a family that had some important connections (with Caesar in particular). This could have proven very advantageous to him as Catullus lived in a period when strong individuals of great achievement, like Pompey and Caesar, became instant media personalities and won the attention of everyone in Rome, including poets.[21] There is though remarkably little in his poetry to show it: far from writing an epic on Caesar's deeds, Catullus wrote insults.[22] B. Gold supposes that one of the personages whose friendship might have been of some importance for the young poet in Rome was Cornelius Nepos, his compatriot from Cisalpine Gaul and at that time already a man of some connections. As a prominent writer, befriended with various literary figures (e.g. with Cicero and Atticus), Nepos seems to have been in a position to help Catullus gain recognition and have his book circulate. Gold presumes that for this very reason he became the dedicatee of the Catullan *corpus*.[23] Catullus, as we know, aspires to a very elitist readership. The access to such a public might have been indeed much easier through personal contacts. We might have some doubts of course if Nepos is the most convincing

[18] See Gold 1987: 51.

[19] Williams (1982: 8) emphasizes that "Lucilius invented a type of poetry that was accommodated to the character and outlook of aristocrats; the satire, with its strong autobiographical mode and its concentration on the unique status of the individual."

[20] Williams (1983: 88) points out that "Lucilius is almost everything but a poet. The social status of the man and the freedom of expression which that confered on him, the wealthy self-confidence of a man who felt inferior to none – all this is crucial in understanding L. ... Such gentlemen had previously written prose: works of history or instructional works on farming and law, poetry had been the activity of non-Romans and inferiors, dependent on patronage. What Lucilius did was to invent an entirely new type of poetry, suited to his social rank and character ... sermo, talk or conversation, the free-ranging expression of a powerful personality. This new type of poetry was clearly not of general appeal, but was addressed to an audience of gentlemen like Lucillius himself, mainly Romans, acquaintained with the gossip and happenings of their own circle. Lucillius made the aristocratic asumption that anything of interest to him would naturally interest his audience." As a matter of fact, Lucilius may be the first among the Roman poets (certainly the first among those we know) to describe precisely his most desired readership: <ab indoctissimis> / nec doctissimis <legi me>; Man<ium Manil>ium / Persiumve haec legere nolo, Iunium Congum volo. (*Lib.* XXVI, fr. 632–634), see my comments on the addressee of the Roman verse epistle, Wasyl 2002: 197–198 (for an English summary see p. 235–242).

[21] See Gold: 1987: 54.

[22] Zetzel 1982: 92.

[23] See Gold 1987: 55.

example here (considering his particular relationship with Cicero's circle, not so attractive really for Catullus himself), nevertheless, it seems reasonable to believe that what Catullus sought from his influential 'friends' was nothing more (and nothing less) than a kind of introduction and 'recommendation' to the reading public. Another thing (on which below) that is particularly interesting in Catullus is that he, like earlier Lucilius but even more extensively, exploits his *amicitiae* as a literary theme.

In the case of the Augustan poets the distinction between poets and their powerful friends becomes even more blurred and the discourse on equality-inequality even more complex. It is certain that poets like Horace and Tibullus hardly seem to stand on a par with men like Maecenas and Messalla. However, as White (1993: 13–14) observes, "Though far from equal to their great friends in wealth or dignity, they too generally belong to a social and economic upper class." This should be emphasized. For contemporary scholars it seems rather unlikely that any of the major poets was in real need of financial support,[24] including Horace, whose famous statement 'paupertas impulit audax / ut versus facerem' (*Epist.* 2.2.51–2) is certainly not to be taken literally.[25] Zetzel (1982: 90–91) remarks that "Horace's father, and Horace himself, at least before the civil wars, had the financial if not the social qualification for equestrian status, and even after the war Horace seems to have been able to obtain the post of *scriba quaestorius*."[26] I focus on Horace (who is in fact a very telling example in this context) to highlight again that when discussing the problem of patronage we should not take at face value whatever a poet tells us. Horace's relationship with Maecenas as described by him in his poetry must be read firstly and mainly as a literary, not factual, account. Horace was *libertino patre natus*, but his father, *libertinus*, was a man of enough means to make his son study at best schools in Rome and even abroad, in Athens, and to contact from his earliest childhood with descendants of senatorial and equestrian families. Horace's war experiences were dramatic, even traumatic, but, again, quite typical of his whole generation, at least of many young men of the upper class. Horace did have to find himself in a new political situation and gain new acquaintances, but no more than most of his contemporaries did. Meeting Maecenas undoubtedly changed Horace's life and opened to him a set of opportunities he would not have had otherwise. Nevertheless, it was Maecenas, a literary amateur himself, who decided to take a closer look and eventually strengthen the tie with that a little shy and taciturn young gentleman introduced once by Virgil and Varius.

[24] White 1993: 17–18 analyses in detail the status of poets of the Augustan age arguing that "A poet who can organize his life to fit the domestic routines of the well-to-do must be essentially at leisure himself; he cannot owe his maintenance to work or a position that requires a broad and scheduled commitment of time. ... Poets who did not work had to have other sources of income. Many of them were in a position to live at least in part off the income from capital invested in land and loans, exactly as their wealthier friends lived if not as lavishly." See also *Appendix* I: 211–222.

[25] White 1993: 14 (also Zetzel 1982, following White 1978) focuses on some facts indicating that the very financial situation of Horace was not so deplorable actually. Wistrand 1964: 263 ff., after Fraenkel 1957: 14, postulates that what the poet describes here, rather than only his material condition after the battle of Philippi, is also his state of mind at that time: "The idea that Horace wants to convey to his readers is that his impoverishment made him desperate, and so he was driven to enter upon a reckless and reprehensible acivity – the writing of verses."

[26] Fraenkel: 1957: 15 remarks that "Many of the *scribae quaestorii* belonged to the *ordo equester*. Their situation was profitable enough to make it worth while to purchase the post; that happened more than once and happened, according to Suetonius (*scriptum quaestorium comparavit*), in the case of Horace."

As a matter of fact, the phenomenon that the poets of the Augustan age have to face is that writing poetry (and if not, at least talking poetry) at that time becomes a kind of fashion, a preferable leisure activity of the upper classes. Horace's somewhat sarcastic comments in *Ars Poetica*, l. 382–384: 'qui nescit versus tamen audet fingere. quidni? / liber et ingenuus, praesertim census equestrem / summam nummorum, vitioque remotus ab omni' and in *Epistles* 2.1.117: 'scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim' are probably not unfounded. To the grandees who profess some interest in literature, and quite often try their hands at verse writing (as Maecenas, Messalla Corvinus, Asinius Pollio, Augustus himself did), the connections with poets (and especially with the most promising, most fashionable, or most renowned ones) become extremely precious.[27]

For these reasons, in terms of social and cultural affinities the Augustan poets all the more can count as the equals of great men like Maecenas and Messalla. Not only can they fully practice the kind of reciprocity which we would associate with friendship[28] and not with one-sided 'dependence'. What we also observe is the fact that the proportions and the traditional roles tend to change: now it is the grandees who start to seek the companionship of the poets. This gives to the latter ones outstanding opportunities even if requires also some flexibility.

Poets realize that they attract attention, and especially among those members of high society who pride themselves on their influence over literary opinion, and who do have an influence over this area of social life, who are leaders of fashions, and who even treat this as their major public activity (like Maecenas or Messalla did). Such people do have the power to make some writers trendy and others obsolete, and they do exercise this power: they control the literary market in the sense that they make the books circulate, patronize circles, sponsor recitations, etc. An access to a gentleman of that kind may, and in many cases it probably does, guarantee, if not success, at least gaining some recognition. This is exactly what the famous boor in *Sat.* 1.9 of Horace thinks and we have no reason to believe that he is wholly mistaken.

Such people, as literary figures in their own right, do come to recitations, do read, and do criticize drafts. Poets do have to take their opinions into consideration for the simple reason that they are, or at least happen to be, competent. Besides, these *amici*, and the *amici* of these *amici*, are for the poets the main reading public. This does not necessarily have to be a vicious circle as such a public means in most cases a public of educated taste. In *Sat.* 1.10 Horace singles out Maecenas and some other of his prominent friends, among whom Pollio and Messalla, as his most desired readers,[29] which is probably not a sheer flattery.

[27] White (1993: 24) notices that "Among countless opportunists who were only too eager to dedicate their attention to the rich, poets took priority because they were seen as the stewards of a relatively scarce good. In the first place, they incarnated a value to which everyone paid at least lip service. Poetry was the foundation of Roman schooling, the one non-practical study with which every educated person had been thoroughly imbued. To associate with poets as an adult, therefore, signified a continuing commitment to a certain ideal of liberal arts. ... The company of poets was particularly welcome to those among the elite who themselves wrote verse. ... Verse-writing was to some degree a sport ... it was an activity for which wealthy players wanted company."

[28] See White 1993: 13–14.

[29] ... nam satis est equitem mihi plaudere ... (*Sat.* 1.10.76)
Plotius et Varius, Maecenas Vergiliusque,
Valgius et probet haec Octavius optimus atque

Thus, it is presumably just a matter of form (but usually also a well-advised self-interest) to commend a poem or even the entire book to such *amici*, to distinguish them from the common run of readers by an allocution, or to allude to their suggestions. Here again *recusatio* turns out to be an excellent means of expression. The simple mention of a prominent friend and his *iussa* is enough to compliment him[30] by emphasizing his own interest in liberal arts and his close ties with the Muse's darling. At the same time, *recusatio* functions as a perfect self-advertisement: an author who is asked for a poem, who is even pestered with requests of this sort, must be worth all these efforts. Put more openly, he must be an extra-ordinary poet. Furthermore, such 'compliments', kind as they are, put the recipient under an obligation to the writer and remind him that, being the author's friend or someone who actually demanded a work from him, he should help promote it or react in case it provokes controversy.[31]

Consequently, we should be at least cautious when formulating statements about the 'intrusions' of the grandees on the themes treated by poets in their verses. The passage I have quoted earlier from the letter which Augustus addressed to Horace shows that a similar care is also needed if we try to define Augustus' approach to writers and his interventions with them. The tremendous impact that he had on the literature of his times and the poetic discourse he inspired, multidimensional, varied in forms and themes, and supreme in quality as it is, could not have been a mere result of precise directions from without. Rather, it must be interpreted as a sign that Augustus, an outstanding political figure, an extra-ordinary personality, and somebody who for many of his contemporaries did personify a new order they did wait for, turned out a fascinating poetic *topos* too.

With these few and simple remarks I do not certainly intend to sum up the discussion on Augustus' influence on the poetry of his age. The only point that I am trying to highlight here is that his attitude to poets should be seen and interpreted in a wider context, as a reflection and development of the traditional role that Roman upper classes always played in shaping the literature of their times.

Undoubtedly, in the later years of the Augustan period we may notice some change in the relationships between poets and the *princeps*. Horace's *Odes* 4 (and also *Epistles* 2) not dedicated to Maecenas but as if addressed directly to the emperor, celebrating his very person and the exploits of his sons-in-law, are usually pointed out as the most significant example of this change. Therefore, G. Williams postulates that at certain moment Augustus took over the literary patronage, so far exercised by Maecenas,[32] which brought about an

---

Fuscus et haec utinam Viscorum laudet uterque.
ambitione relegata te dicere possum,
Pollio, te, Messalla, tuo cum fratre, simulque
vos, Bibule et Servi, simul his te, candide Furni (81–86)

[30] Gold 1987: 3–4.

[31] See White 1993: 64–70.

[32] G. Williams consistently speaks of 'political patronage', first exercised for the benefit of Augustus by Maecenas, and later taken over by the *princeps* himself. He only slightly changes his opinion on the position of Maecenas. In his earlier writings 1978: 57–58, Williams, following Syme 1939: 342, stated that about 19 B.C. Augustus dispensed with Maecenas (see also Lyne 1995: 186–192). In a recent paper (1990: 267) he argues against the alleged Maecenas' 'falling from favor' and concludes: "The new hypothesis that is required, therefore, is this: the literary patronage exercised by Maecenas was unique in that it was exercised for the political benefit of Augustus, and, from the very beginning, it envisaged that when the right time

immediate response on the part of the poets who started to treat more frequently political themes. As a matter of fact, however, is seems reasonable to assume that what evolved with time was not only, and not actually, Augustus' approach to poets and poetry but also poets' approach to the *princeps*. It is quite likely that once they realized that Augustus and his palace had become the real center not just of political but also of social and cultural life, they soon began to look directly to the emperor trying hard to write in a way that would catch the attention of this particular reader.[33] In other words, Augustus eventually becomes the 'virtual reader' for the authors of his age. Paradoxically, the most spectacular example of this focus on the *princeps* perceived as the main recipient of one's writings may be the exilic poetry of Ovid, addressed implicitly to Augustus.[34] We might even argue that in this respect the Augustan literature of the last decades, and especially Ovid's Pontic elegies, are already a kind of harbinger of the court poetry[35] of later centuries circulating within a narrow group, pyramidal in form, with the emperor at the top.[36]

R. P. Saller (1982: 5) emphasizes that "During the Republic patron-client relations, far from being thought an evil, were reinforced by law and religious mores." He also (1982: 3) points out that "The importance of patronage in ancient Rome extends beyond the realm of politics, just as in many Mediterranean societies today where the institution influences the way in which people view their world, earn their living, associate with their fellow townsmen, and relate to the state administration."

This interpretation, as it seems, applies quite well to what we have observed analyzing poets' relationships with prominent citizens of their times. Roman authors perceived the institution of *amicitia*, and consequently the custom of *maioribus uti*, as the natural factor determining their social position as well as their literary success. It would certainly be an oversimplification to see the persons who patronized their writings as mere 'sponsors', especially if we take into consideration that the very material support was not always of major importance. The principal role of the 'patrons' was rather to act as a sort of 'intermediary' providing contacts between poets and other members of high society. It is not surprising then that poets did cultivate grandees and willingly boasted about their influential friends hoping to catch the attention and win the favor of the wider audience. We must remember that in ancient Rome this 'wider audience', as we call it, was probably still a relatively narrow, and above all hermetic, group which would not be ready to admit 'outsiders'.

Thus, the ties with prominent figures as described by the poets themselves may be treated and interpreted as a separate subject matter. As I have pointed out earlier, such *amicitiae* provide material for verse since at least Lucilius' times. In the writings of some

came, Augustus would take it over, and Maecenas would fade into the background." P. White 1993: 93; 116; 154–155; 206–208, who strongly opposes the political perception of Augustan poetry as anachronistic, postulates that "Augustus approached poetry and poets in the same benign and patronizing spirit as did other Roman aristocrats before him"; "his literary initiatives were for the most part conventional and give the impression of being random acts without a consistent purpose behind them."

[33] See White 1993: 111.

[34] See White 1993: 206; see also Barchiesi's 1994 interpretation of the addressee of *Tristia* 2.

[35] See Citroni 1995: 459–463; 480.

[36] Statius may be mentioned here as the most telling example of a court poet, addressing his poetry by definition to the emperor. In the *Praefatio* to *Silv.* 4 he states: 'deinde multa ex illis iam domino Caesari dederam, et quanto hoc plus est quam edere?'

authors this particular theme turns out to be one of the most important and pervasive, and as such deserves undoubtedly a separate thorough study. In the following part of my survey I will focus only on selected texts by Catullus, Horace, and Ovid, and particularly on passages in which these three poets themselves analyze and define the character or the goal of their relationships with some influential personages.

Catullus treats his contacts with a public figure, namely the praetor Memmius, twice, in *Carm.* 10 and in *Carm.* 28. In both he alludes to the travel to Bithynia he made as a member of the praetor's staff. This benefit should have obliged him to express loyalty, or at least gratefulness, to the benefactor. However, in both he does the opposite. In *Carm.* 10 he complains that now neither praetors themselves nor their staff can find any means of coming back fatter than they went and blames his lack of booty on his *potens amicus*, the governor Memmius, not caring a straw for his subalterns.[37]

In *Carm.* 28, he addresses his two mates, Veranius and Fabullus, who are subalterns of Piso. In this context he remembers once again his own 'patron', Memmius, in order to compare him with Piso.[38] In the end, Memmius and Piso are called 'opprobria Romuli Remique' (l. 15) for misleading their young *amici* who attached themselves to such personages on people's advice but were cheated out of what they had expected. What we have in *Carm.* 28 is a witty joke at the expense of everyone involved, including Catullus' friends. The language is abusive and colloquial. Catullus defines Piso as 'vappa' (l. 5) and Memmius as 'verpa' (l. 12). Consequently, the phrase 'pete nobiles amicos' (l. 13) has a clear ironic sense.[39] This is certainly not a verse written to compliment, not to speak celebrate, a patron, and it is quite obvious that this is not the goal of the poet. Quite on the contrary, Catullus speaks here in strongly anti-social terms; he sneers not just at Piso and Memmius but at the whole system of social relations in Rome in which cultivating grandees (*potentibus uti* or *petere nobiles amicos*) was an element of paramount importance. As we can see, Catullus easily and smoothly adjusts the theme of patronage to the provocative tone

[37] respondi, id quod erat, nihil neque ipsis
nunc praetoribus esse nec cohorti
cur quisquam caput unctius referret,
praesertim quibus esset irrumator
praetor, nec faceret pili cohortem. (9–13)

[38] Verani optime tuque mi Fabulle,
quid rerum geritis? satisne cum isto
vappa frigoraque et famem tulistis?
ecquidnam in tabulis patet lucelli
expensum, ut mihi, qui meum secutus
praetorem refero datum lucello?
o Memmi, bene me ac diu supinum
tota ista trabe lentus irrumasti.
sed, quantum video, pari fuistis
casu, nam nihilo minore verpa
farti estis. pete nobiles amicos! (3–13)

[39] Gold 1987: 58–59.

of his poetics.[40] At the same time, however, we must not forget that Catullan poetic discourse, even if provocative sometimes, does not refuse the traditional Roman ethics. Catullus never denies the value of *amicitia* itself; rather, his *corpus* is to be read as a celebration of such bonds based on *fides* and *pietas*.[41]

In the poetry of Horace, especially in *Sermones* and *Epistles* 1, the theme of *potentibus uti* is one of the main. In one of his literary self-presentations, in *Sat.* 2.1, Horace even defines himself with pride as someone who has befriended the greats, and compares his experience to that of Lucilius, a friend of Laelius and Scipio ('infra Lucili censum ingeniumque, tamen me / cum magnis vixisse invita fatebitur usque / invidia', ll. 75–77). Horace, unlike Catullus, treats the topic of cultivating grandees seriously and discusses it in a wider ethical context. When describing his relationship with Maecenas,[42] he points out mutual respect and devotion. The tie is based on common values and common interests (in letters), and on something that we might define as moral equality, which, as emphasized in *Sat.* 1.6, runs counter to the status differences ('quod placui tibi, qui turpi secernis honestum, / non patre praeclaro, sed vita et pectore puro', ll. 63–64).

Even in *Epodes* 1, where Horace exploits the motif of accompanying the patron in a war expedition, he presents it in a completely different light than Catullus did. Horace declares that he will follow his darling Maecenas to the ends of the earth not to gain anything but even at the cost of neglecting his wealth.[43]

Like later in *Epistles* 1.1, also in these earlier writings of Horace is Maecenas presented as a patron urging him to work, precisely, to finish the *iambi* he has promised (*Epodes* 14: 'promissum carmen', l. 7). Maecenas' demands are even called molesting ('occidis saepe rogando', l. 5). It is clear though that the tone of this whole text is light-hearted rather than serious. Horace turns the poem into a love piece by referring to Maecenas' passions as well as to his own ones, which, as he explains, hinder the progress of his work.[44] In this way he

[40] It is worth noting that the same idea of using the theme of patronage as a vehicle for expressing anti-social sentiments returns later in Propertius, *Elegies* 1.6, see Gold 1987: 112.

[41] Interestingly enough, Catullus applies the very same ethical standards to his relationships with Lesbia, see Styka 1994: 126–128.

[42] Gold 1987: 115–141 offers a very thorough study of the relationship between Horace and Maecenas as presented by the poet throughout his *oeuvre*. It is not my intention of course to repeat her argument, so rather that describing in detail the 'Maecenas' theme' in Horace's writings I focus on some turning points in his 'poetics of patronage', especially characteristic in his later texts, no longer addressed to Maecenas, which Gold did not take into consideration.

[43] feremus, et te vel per Alpium iuga
inhospitalem et Caucasum,
vel Occidentis usque ad ultimum sinum
forti sequemur pectore. (11–14)
libenter hoc et omne militabitur
bellum in tuae spem gratiae (23–24)
satis superque me benignitas tua
ditavit: haut paravero,
quod aut avarus ut Chremes terra premam,
discinctus aut perdam ut nepos. (31–34)

[44] candide Maecenas, occidis saepe rogando:
deus, deus nam me vetat

creates a poetic union between himself and Maecenas by claiming that they both suffer from the same affliction.[45] Again, what Horace actually stresses here is his close relationship, his familiarity with Maecenas: he knows about his friend's deepest emotions and feels free to show it publicly.

In *Epistles* Horace develops the idea that befriending great men requires high moral qualities. This is clearly indicated in *Epist.* 1.1 where Horace again emphasizes his faithfulness to Maecenas. Maecenas is called 'rerum tutela mearum', and Horace claims that he is totally dependent on him ('de te pendentis, te respicientis amici', l. 105).[46] However the context of the final passage is punning and ironic: Horace complains that Maecenas cares more about his badly cut nails than about his lapses in judgement (ll. 94–105), the statement is programmatic. It is to indicate that *Epistles* will treat as one of their main themes the question of friendship, and in particular in relation to the problem of independence. It is quite obvious that Maecenas will be used as the central figure in this discourse. We see it clearly in *Epist.* 1.7 where the impetus for the discussion is Maecenas' urging of Horace to return from his farm to Rome and Horace's refusal to accede.[47]

Horace's refusal is elaborated and illustrated with several short tales.[48] Treating the subject of the relationship between *humilis* and *potens amicus* and their respective duties and rights, the poet focuses on the problem of gifts exchange (integral, as we have seen, to the Roman notion of friendship). His stories illustrate bad examples of both partners: the giver and the taker.[49] The Calabrian host who offers pears to his visitor is a bad giver: he gives only what he does not want or need himself. The fox, the taker, whose bloated stomach prevents escape from the corn bin, is the main villain. He takes too much and then expects his freedom to boot. The only positive example is Telemachus, the taker, who

---

inceptos olim promissum carmen, iambos
ad umbilicum adducere. (5–8)

[45] See Gold 1987: 120.

[46] See Gold 1987: 126.

[47]. Quinque dies tibi pollicitus me rure futurum
Sextilem totum mendax desideror. ...
si me vivere vis sanum recteque valentem,
quam mihi das aegro, dabis aegrotare timenti,
Maecenas, veniam... (1–5)
quodsi bruma nives Albanis inlinet agris,
ad mare descendet vates tuus et sibi parcet
contractusque leget... (10–12)
dignum praestabo me etiam pro laude merentis.
quodsi me noles usquam discedere, reddes
forte latus, nigros angusta fronte capillos,
reddes dulce loqui, reddes ridere decorum et
inter vina fugam Cinarae maerere protervae. (24–28)

[48] See Gold 1987: 127. We can see clear similarities between this text and *Sat.* 2.6, which is also closed with an apologus, the famous fable of the two mice. The message of the fable also concerns the question of freedom: well-being is valuable but not at the cost of loosing one's safety. What matters is self-measurement, see Gagliardi 1988: 24 n. 57.

[49] See Gold 1987: 127–128.

declines a gift from Agamemnon on grounds of suitability: Agamemnon's horses will be of no good on the narrow and grassless land of Ithaca.

The final and longest story concerns the weakness and failures of both the giver and the taker. Philippus, a landowner, purposely wants to make a joke at the expense of his small friend, Volteius Mena, fond of Philippus' farm, and he offers him money to buy one for himself. Farming though does not suit Mena, who has never practiced it before, so Philippus' wrong-spirited benevolence, imprudently accepted, deprives him of his very self. Certainly the conclusion to be drawn is that Maecenas is neither Calabrian host ('non quo more piris vesci Calaber iubet hospes, / tu me fecisti locupletem', ll. 14–15), nor Philippus. Unlike Philippus, he knows Horace's needs and respects his dignity. Likewise, Horace is neither the greedy fox (*hac ego si compellor imagine, cuncta resigno*, l. 34),[50] nor the desperate man that Mena has become at the end of the story. He can measure himself and accepts gifts only if they would suit him and if he is sure of the intentions of the giver. The message of this discourse is as follows: gift giving, as a sign of friendship, is good and desirable. Gifts though are acceptable only if they are given in the proper spirit. Only then they will not affect the independence and the dignity of a great man's friend. The keyword, however, is self-measurement (and, consequently, self-contentment). It is the *humilis amicus* who must be able to assess what will be appropriate for him. Befriending great men does bring about the danger of loosing one's freedom, but mostly for those who cannot reign themselves and are not free from craving.

The question of saving, but also of tempering, one's freedom when dealing with figures in power returns in *Epistles* 1.18. It is presented here not in relation to Horace but to the addressee, the young Lollius. Lollius, as it seems, is a man of an exceptionally free or independent temper (*liberrime*, l.1) .[51] Therefore, at the beginning Horace reminds him that friendship is a mean between flattery and rudeness, which only poses as freedom ('libertas', l. 8).[52] Next, he points to delicacy and courteous dissimulation, which are necessary among

[50] hac ego si compellor imagine, cuncta resigno:
nec somnum plebis laudo satur altilium nec
otia divitiis Arabum liberrima muto.
saepe verecundum laudasti rexque paterque
audisti coram nec verbo parcius absens:
inspice, si possum donata reponere laetus. (34–39)
parvum parva decent, mihi iam non regia Roma,
sed vacuum Tibur placet et inbelle Tarentum. (44–45)

[51] McGann (1969: 77) observes that "There are ... parts of the epistle which bring a personality vividly before the reader. At the beginning (1 ff., 15 ff.) Lollius is shown as independent and self-willed and near the end (92 ff.) as, sometimes at least, unsociable, withdrawn and silent." Kilpatrick 1986: 53 goes even further supposing that "It appears that Lollius has embarked upon his *cultura potentis amici* already (86). Horace implies that he risks spoiling things for himself (86–88). Men resent others whose attitude appears to be a criticism of themselves (89–93). Lollius' intemperate behaviour must be offending his *potens amicus*."

[52] Si bene te novi, metues, liberrime Lolli,
scurrantis speciem praebere, professus amicum.
ut matrona meretrici dispar erit atque
discolor, infido scurrae distabit amicus.
est huic diversum vitio vitium prope maius,
asperitas agrestis et inconcinna gravisque,

friends. He advises Lollius to hunt with his friend if he wants to rather than to stay home writing poetry (ll. 44–48); not to fall in love with his household slaves (ll. 72–75), to be cautious about introducing others into his company (ll. 76–81) and, above all, to be compliant: sad when he is sad, jocular if he is cheerful, relaxed if he is sedentary, quick if he is clever (ll. 89–90). Such remarks though might rather discourage Lollius, given his *libertas*. In fact, what Horace seems to think is that at this point of his life the *liberrimus* Lollius should rather eschew the unequal friendship. The poet does not state it openly of course, but what he does is urging the young man to study philosophy (ll. 96–103). Lollius, according to Horace, should in the first place learn to live in peace, free from desire, fear, and the hope of vain things, to discover his very nature: as the poet puts it, to find out "what will restore him as a friend to himself" (*quid te tibi reddet amicum*, l. 101). Apparently, Horace's conclusion is that no sooner than Lollius is at peace of himself and no sooner than he is able to apply his *libertas* properly will he be prepared to enjoy friendship with a social superior.[53] Again, like in *Epist.* 1.7, Horace emphasizes that the relationship with a powerful friend, given the pitfalls of such a tie, requires a particular prudence and a proper mental attitude. Self-control and self-knowledge are necessary. Otherwise, it is easy either to misapply one's freedom or to get into slavery, but not of the patron, rather of one's own vices.

Horace, as we have seen in *Sat.* 2.1, prides himself on his relationships with the grandees. Even more, he never seems to deny that this is one of the factors that have helped him to his success. Though, he always makes it clear that he achieved the approbation by the social superiors because of his moral qualities.

Actually, allusions to his social position, the place he rose to thanks to his poetry and his rectitude, and in spite of status handicaps, are another of the most recurrent topics in the Horatian discourse on patronage. As early as in the *Sermones* Horace points to the fact that he is seen (at least by certain kind of people) as an influential personage, at least in literary circles. The boor in *Sat.* 1.9 hopes to be introduced by him into the company of Maecenas (*haberes / magnum adiutorem, posset qui ferre secundas, / hunc hominem velles si tradere*, ll. 45–47). The passerby, described in *Sat* 2.6, also regard him as one of the closest friends of Maecenas and therefore familiar with some affairs of the country which for them, men in the street, would be veiled in secrecy (*numquid de Dacis audisti?*, l. 53; *quid? militibus promissa Triquetra / praedia Caesar an est Itala tellure daturus?*, ll. 55–56).

The topic is also retreated in the *Epistles*. A very interesting text is *Epist.* 1.9, addressed to Tiberius and being a kind of *litterae commendaticiae* Horace writes in behalf of his young friend Septimius. Septimius, as the poet puts is, has the most exaggerated notion of Tiberius' regard for Horace and has repeatedly urged him to write this laudatory. Horace finds this rather embarassing and uneasy but eventually decides to give in to the obbligations of friendship and bestow this favor on his young *amicus*.[54]

---

quae se commendat tonsa cute, dentibus atris,
dum volt libertas dici mera veraque virtus. (1–8)

Konstan (1997: 141) notices that: "The doctrine derives from Aristotle, who defines friendship ... as midway between flattery and surliness or quarrelsomeness."

[53] Konstan 1997: 141–142.

[54] Septimius ...
... rogat et prece cogit,

We can easily recognize in this text an echo of *Sat.* 2.6 and 1.9. In this poem, however, Horace accentuates one particular fact, hardly present in the previous ones: as it seems, he, *libertino patre natus*, has gradually become a grandee himself: certain young people, like Septimius, now seek benefits from him. From *Epist.* 1.3 and 1.8[55] we learn that there is indeed a group of young aspiring poets who have gathered around Horace. He gives them encouragement in their literary pursuits as well as some personal advice as regards how to deal with one another, how to behave in prosperity. Apparently, Horace has moved high up the social ladder, he has achieved the friendship of the greatest of the land.[56] It is significant that now Horace presents himself not only as Maecenas' familiar but also as someone having personal contacts with Augustus' family. As we know, on Augustus' prompting, in *Epist.* 2.1 he will go even one step further. In his speech to the emperor he will treat subjects to which poets would be particularly sensitive, lobbying for his support for modern literature, but of highest caliber only. In other words, in *Epist.* 2.1 he will readopt the role he has assumed before in *Epist.* 1.9: he will speak to the country's greatest luminary in behalf of a certain group of people, the poets, whose interests he will try to represent and promote. Put more metaphorically, in the *Letter to Augustus* Horace speaks not just as a poet but also as a 'patron', a supporter of his fellow-votaries.

This self-presentation of Horace must be read in the wider context of his poetic discourse. Horace's poetry, multi-thematic as it is, is mostly auto-thematic, in the sense that one of its major topics is the poetry itself: its value, its social function. By emphasizing his role and his position in the society, Horace, the poet, does nothing more and nothing less that again pointing at poetry as the supreme value of human culture.

Horace throughout his oeuvre shows himself as *potentibus cultor*. Interestingly enough, Ovid is another poet who exploits this motif, although he starts to do it not earlier than in his exilic works.[57] Many of his *Letters from Pontus* are addressed to the most prominent Romans, closely connected with Augustus and his family. This is not only a natural behavior of an exile petitioning for an intercession. Ovid, as it seems, wishes to show to the

---

scilicet ut tibi se laudare et tradere coner,
dignum mente domoque legentis honesta Neronis (2–4)
quid possim videt ac novit me valdius ipso.
multa quidem dixi, cur excusatus abirem,
sed timui, mea ne finxisse minora putarer,
dissimulator opis propriae, mihi commodus uni.
sic ego, maioris fugiens opprobria culpae,
frontis ad urbanae descendi praemia ...(6–11)
scribe tui gregis hunc et fortem crede bonumque (13)

The ethical content of this letter is discussed by McGann 1969: 58 and Kilpatrick 1986: 45. Summarizing the content of the epistle I follow the paraphrase given by Kilpatrick.

[55] White (1993: 47) remarks that "The young poets of the *Epistles* must represent the clique that gathered around Horace. Ovid, reminiscing about his career in poetry, recalls that "as I courted my elders, so the younger generation courted me" (*Tr.* 4.10.55). Success in poetry meant success in capital society, and that enabled a poet to wield influence over others even in spite of status handicaps."

[56] See Mayer 1994: 3–4.

[57] Syme 1978: 76; 117; 135; 180 notices that Ovid's pre-exilic poems (*Amores*) do not carry an address or dedication to a friend or a patron. This does differentiate him from other Roman elegists. See also Citroni 1995: 431–439.

reading public in Rome (and to Augustus himself) that, despite his relegation, he still remains bond by the ties of friendship with some members of the elite gathered around the *princeps*.[58]

Ovid-exile reveals his familial connections (through his third wife, probably a Fabia[59]) with Fabius Maximus, married to the emperor's cousin (*ille ego de vestra cui data nupta domo est, Ex P.* 1.2.136; *coniunx mea sarcina vestra est*, 145), and Macer (*mea quod coniunx non aliena tibi est, Ex P.* 2.10.10). In *Ex P.* 2.1 he addresses Germanicus Caesar.

He also, and in particular, recalls his relationships with the literary circles, his involvement in the poetic coterie patronized by Messalla Corvinus (in the letters addressed to his sons, alluding again to the rules of familial *obligatio*[60]) and his ties of *sodalitas* with its religious connotation with his fellow-votaries (exemplary is the text written on occasion of the feast day of Bacchus[61]).

We may argue then that Ovid's exilic *oeuvre*, especially the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, treat the theme of the relationship between the poet and his *amici* as one of its most important, if not the programmatic one.[62] What is unique about Ovid's exploitation of this motif is that he presents his poetry as an element of a larger system of mutual obligation.[63] In *Ex P.* 3.9 he declares that the purpose of his writings was not his own renown but an *officium*, his willingness to express gratitude for fidelity shown by his friends and to repay it ('da veniam scriptis, quorum non gloria nobis / causa, sed utilitas officiumque fuit', ll. 55–56).

---

[58] Davisson (1985: 245) argues that "Ovid's ingenious use of epistolary form and content to emphasize his isolation ... suggests that he viewed the poetic epistle as a literary opportunity and a way to engage the sympathy of his entire audience – future as well as contemporary." Scholars point to the fact that *Tr.* 2, the self-apology of Ovid is in fact directed not to Augustus, but to the intellectual elites of Rome, see Nugent 1990: 239–257; Barchiesi 1994: 149–182.

[59] Helzle 1989: 184.

[60] nec tuus est genitor nos infitiatus amicos,
hortator studii causaque faxque mei (*Ex P.* 1.7.27–28)
me tuus ille pater, Latiae facundia linguae
primus, ut auderem committere carmina famae,
impulit: ingenii dux fuit ille mei. (*Ex P.* 2.3.75 & 77–78)

[61] ...flectere tempta
Caesareum numen, numine, Bacche, tuo.
vos quoque, consortes studii, pia turba, poetae,
haec eadem sumpto quisque rogate mero. (*Tr.* 5.3.45–48)
idque ita, si vestrum merui candore favorem,
nullaque iudicio littera laesa meo est,
si, veterum digne veneror cum scripta virorum,
proxima non illis esse minora reor.
sic igitur dextro faciatis Apolline carmen:
quod licet, inter vos nomen habete meum. (53–58)

[62] Claassen (1999: 120) notices that "Gratitude for aid, largery unspecified, and for fidelity, as contrasted with desertion by others, occurs most frequently in *Ex Ponto* 1–3, the collection which treats so largely on the duties of friendship. The collection *Ex Ponto* 1–3 may be seen as a celebration of friendship, an '*Ars Amicitiae*' offered to the poet's Roman readership as a surogate for the offending *Ars Amatoria*."

[63] This poetry, as Claassen 1999: 119 observes, is "Rooted in the tradition of the Roman system of mutual obligation."

If we read closer other texts of the two collections, we find out that Ovid indeed makes an extensive use of the language of *amicitia*.[64] Apart from *officium*, words like *munus*, *gratia*, *meritum* and *memoria*, *fides*, *foedus amicitiae*, *debere* (*debitor*), *tutela* are to be found. Words like *debere*, *debitor*[65] to express the indebtedness to the addressee would be quite natural, but Ovid goes even one step further. In the letter to Sextus Pompey he calls himself "the work of his guardianship" (*tutelaeque munus opusque tuae*, *Ex P.* 4.1.36) or even "not the last of his possessions"(*ego pars rerum non ultima, Sexte, tuarum*, *Ex P.* 4.1.35) "a small part of his estate" (*inter opes et me, parvam rem, pone paternas*, *Ex P.* 4.15.13) and his "slave for all the time" (*se fore mancipii tempus in omne tui*, *Ex P.* 4.5.40) (expressions like *res paternas*, *pars rerum, opes*).

By naming friends in his poetry Ovid also performs an *officium* which is supposed either to repay them for their favours or oblige them to grant one in the future.[66] The nature of his *officium* is, naturally, the promise of immortality by means of his song.[67] Thus, the

[64] It is interesting to notice that Ovid uses the language of *amicitia* also in the poems addressed to his wife. It cannot be surprising for the use of the language of *amicitia* in the context of love poetry is to be found in the Roman literature since Catullus' *Carmina*. White (1993: 88–89) points out that "In several ways the attachment of the elegist to his mistress resembles the relationship by which poets and others were tied to the leaders of the society. To the mistress as to the society friend, a poem may be offered as a gift (*munus* or *donum*) or as a service (*officium*) superior in value to the gifts and services ordinarily exchanged in society." M. Helzle (1989: 188–189) argues though that "Instead of viewing Fabia as a development of an elegiac *domina*, (as B. Nagle 1980: 43 wishes). I want to propose a completely different picture of Ovid's relationship towards his wife during the years of his exile, namely that he talks to her in the same way as he talks to his patrons and friends. From the very beginning Ovid uses some of the standard terms of patronage when writing to his wife, words like *fides*, *officium*, *munus*, *debere*, *tutela*, *meritum*, *gratia* and *memoria*. ... We have known ... that the Latin love-poets use the language of *amicitia*, as it is often called today, when expressing their closest personal relationships and ties. The same applies to Ovid here: he also uses the language of patronage to describe his relationship with his wife. ... On top of these isolated words, Ovid offers a whole couplet on his wife's role during his years in exile: utque iuvent alii, tu debes vincere amicos, / uxor, et ad partis prima venire tuas. (*Ex P.* 3.1.41–42). It emerges, therefore, that Ovid is not just using the language of *amicitia* as figurative speech for an amatory relationship but rather literally. He needs his wife to look after his affairs in Rome. Above all she is to influence the powers that be to obtain a recall. He needs her like all the other *amici* to keep petitioning, begging, reminding Augustus or Livia of her husband. And of course if she was a member of the *gens Fabia* as postulated, she was in a superb position to influence the emperor indirectly; for Fabius Maximus was one of the most important people at the court during Augustus' last years."

[65] officium nec te fallit, amice, tuum.
haec mihi semper erunt imis infixa medullis,
perpetuusque animae **debitor** huius ero. (*Tr.* 1.5.8–10)
O tua si sineres in nostris nomina poni
carminibus ...
quid tibi **deberem**, tota sciretur in urbe (Tr. 5.9.1–2 &5)
ut iam nil praestes, animi sum factus amici
debitor, et meritum velle iuvare voco. (*Ex P.* 4.8.5–6)
Accipe, Pompei, deductum carmen ab illo,
debitor est vitae qui tibi, Sexte, suae. (*Ex P.* 4.1.1–2)

[66] See Nagle 1980: 80.

[67] dignus es, et, quoniam laudem pietate mereris,
non erit officii gratia surda tui.

poet does not only present his poetry as a gift he can give,[68] he also emphasizes that this gift, unique as it is, is fully exchangable for other kind of 'gifts' of more immediate nature, the favors he needs now being in a critical situation, like petitioning for his case, looking after his affairs in Rome, including his literary matters, helping his books circulate (this motif is treated in the letters addressed to Brutus, the addressee of *Ex P.* 1.1 and 3.9, therefore the dedicatee of the whole collection *Ex Ponto* 1–3 and earlier in *Tr.* 3.14).

So, paradoxically, Ovid's exilic poetry, counter to its very title, changes into a celebration of his 'presence' in Rome, not the physical one but through his personal ties, obligations that are still standing as long as the gifts exchange continues. On the other hand, the very same poetry is equally tinged with despair, with feeling of being betrayed and deserted by other *amici*. In one of the *Tristia* (*Tr.* 3.4) Ovid warns his anonymous addressee paraphrazing the well-known Epicurean slogan : "live for yourself and avoid great names" and reveals that the reason of his fall was nothing more than such a tie. "For though the powerful alone can help, rather would such a one not help if he can harm", he adds.[69] We are given no clues as regards who the unnamed *nomen magnum* might be. It is tempting though to interpret this mysterious figure as someone of the emperor's entourage if not Augustus himself, especially if we juxtapose verse 6 *saevum praelustri* ***fulmen ab arce venit*** with a passage from the programmatic *Tr.* 1.1.69–72: *forsitan expectes, an in alta Palatia missum / scandere te iubeam Caesareamque domum. / ignoscant augusta mihi loca dique locorum! /* ***venit*** *in hoc illa* ***fulmen ab arce*** *caput.*[70]

Such a reading of *Tr.* 3.4 would correspond with these interpretations of Ovid's exilic discourse which emphasize its strongly anti-Augustan tenor hidden behind the surface flatteries.[71] Consequently, Ovid might be seen as the first (and actually the only one) among the Roman poets to point out that the relationship between a poet and men in power may

---

crede mihi, nostrum si non mortale futurum est
carmen, in ore frequens posteritatis eris. (*Ex P.* 2.6.31–34)

[68] vos quoque pectoribus nostris haeretis, amici,
dicere quos cupio nomine quemque suo.
sed timor officium cautus compescit, et ipsos
in nostro poni carmine nolle puto. (*Tr* 3.4.63–66)

[69] usibus edocto si quicquam credis amico,
vive tibi et longe nomina magna fuge.
vive tibi quantumque potes praelustria vita:
saevum praelustri fulmen ab arce venit.
nam quamquam soli possunt prodesse potentes,
non prosit potius siquis obesse potest. (3–8)
crede mihi, bene qui latuit bene vixit ... (25)
haec ego si monitor monitus prius ipse fuissem,
in qua debebam forsitan urbe forem. (13–14)

Here and earlier I quote the Wheeler's translations for the Loeb edition of *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*.

[70] Throughout the *Tristia* (and in particular in *Tr.* 1) Ovid programmatically presents Augustus as the angry Jove: *Tr.* 1.3.11: 'non aliter stupui, quam qui Jovis ignibus ictus / vivit'; *Tr.* 1.4.26: 'infestum mihi sit satis esse Iovem'; *Tr.* 1.5.78: 'me Iovis ira premit'; *Tr.* 3.4.7: 'Jovis percussum', see Claassen 1986 and 1999; Wasyl 2003 (forthcoming).

[71] In particular Barchiesi 1994 and 1994; Claassen 1986 and 1999.

bring about not only beneficial but also catastrophic effects if this man turns out not a *potens amicus* but a *potentissimus inimicus*.

Three different poets, three different poetics, and three differents treatments of the theme of *potentibus uti*. In each case, however, it is a deeply individual and highly original (in the very Roman sense of the term, where being original means *idem aliter referre*) interpretation by a poet who considers himself member of the cultural, but also social, elite and who feels self-assured in his position knowing well the value and the quality of his art. This can be said about Catullus who triffles with some institutions and codes of social behavior, though does not hesitate to make use of them; this can be said about Ovid, the exiled poet, who nonetheless emphasizes his ties with Rome, through personal relations in particular, and therefore his presence there; this, finally, can be said about Horace, *libertino patre natus*, as he himself wants to be seen, who points out that it was thanks to poetry, his poetry, that he befriended the greatest of the state and thus became able to strive for recognition, not just for himself but for the *ars poetica* as such.

In conclusion, one simple comment should probably be added. As it seems, the Roman literature developed in a very peculiar milieu formed of and ruled by mostly personal connections. This fact must have had an impact on personal lives as well as on productions of the Roman litterateurs, which, again, might be easily interpreted as a boundary. Nevertheless, the boundaries of the very same nature are to be found everywhere and every time: the authors and their books always depend heavily on their critics, their promoters, and, above all, on their readers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barchiesi, A. (1994): Insegnare ad Augusto: Orazio, "Epistole" 2, 1 e Ovidio, "Tristia II", in J. Strauss Clay, P. Mitsis, A. Schiesaro, (eds.), *Mega nepios: il ruolo del destinatario nell'epos didascalico = Materiali e discussioni* 31: 149–183.

Barchiesi, A. (1994): *Il Poeta e il Principe. Ovidio e il discorso augusteo*. Rome.

Citroni, M. (1995): *Poesia e lettori in Roma antica. Forme della comunicazione letteraria*. Bari.

Claassen, J.M. (1986): *Poeta, Exsul, Vates. A Stylistic and Literary Analysis of Ovid's "Tristia" and "Epistulae ex Ponto"*. Stellenbosch: Diss. University of Stellenbosch.

Claassen, J.M. (1999): *Displaced Persons. The literature of Exile from Cicero to Boethius*. Madison, WI.

Cugusi, P., coll., (1979): *Epistolographi Latini Minores*, Vol. II: *Aetatem Ciceronianam et Augusteam Amplectens*, p. 1: *Testimonia et Fragmenta*. Turin.

Finley, M. (1973): *The Ancient Economy*. London.

Davisson, M.H. (1985): "Tristia" 5.13 and Ovid's use of epistolary form and content, *Classical Journal* 80: 238–246.

Fraenkel, E. (1957): *Horace*. Oxford.

Gagliardi, D. (1988): *Un'arte di vivere. Saggio sul Primo Libro delle Epistole oraziane*. Rome.

Gold, B. (1987): *Literary Patronage in Greece and Rome*. Chapel Hill, NC.

Helzle, M. (1989): Mr and Mrs Ovid, *Greece and Rome* 36.2: 183–193.

Kilpatrick, R.S. (1986): *The Poetry of Friendship. Horace, Epistles I*. Edmonton, Alta.

Konstan, D. (1997): *Friendship in the Classical World*. Cambridge.

Lyne, R.O.A. M. (1995): *Horace, Behind the Public Poetry*. New Haven, CT.
Mayer, R., (ed.), (1994): Horace, *Epistles Book I*. Cambridge.
McGann, M.J. (1969): *Studies in Horace's first book of Epistles*. Coll. Latomus Vol. 100. Bruxelles.
Nagle, B. (1980): *The Poetics of Exile. Program and Polemic in the Tristia and Epistulae ex Ponto of Ovid*. Coll. Latomus Vol. 170. Bruxelles.
Nugent, S. G. (1990): "Tristia" 2: Ovid and Augustus, in Raaflaub, K. A., Toher, .(eds.), *Between Republic and Empire. Interpretations of Augustus and His Principate*. Berkeley, CA: 239–257.
Saller, R.P. (1982): *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire*. Cambridge.
Styka, J. (1994): *Studia nad literaturą rzymską epoki republikańskiej. Estetyka satyry republikańskiej, Estetyka neoteryków*. Cracow.
Syme, R. (1939): *The Roman Revolution*. Oxford.
Syme, R. (1978): *History in Ovid*. Oxford.
Wasyl, A.M. (2002): *Rzymski list poetycki. Próba opisania gatunku*. Cracow.
Wasyl, A.M. (2003, forthcoming): Ovidius heros. Epic Elements in Ovid's "Tristia," *Classica Cracoviensia* 8 (forthcoming).
White, P. (1993): *Promised Verse. Poets in the Society of Augustan Rome*. Cambridge, MA.
White, P. (1978): Amicitia and the Profession of Poetry in Early Imperial Rome, *JRS* LXVIII: 74–92.
White, P. (1982): Positions for Poets in Early Imperial Rome, in Gold, B. (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome*. Austin, TX: 50–65.
Williams, G. (1982): Phases of Political Patronage of Literature in Rome, in B. Gold, (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome*. Austin, TX: 3–27.
Williams, G. (1983): *The Nature of Roman Poetry*. Oxford.
Williams, G. (1978): *Change and Decline. Roman Literature in the Early Empire*. Berkeley, CA.
Williams, G. (1990): Did Maecenas "Fall from Favor"? Augustan Literary Patronage, in Raaflaub, K. A., Toher, M. (eds.), *Between Republic and Empire. Interpretations of Augustus and His Principate*. Berkeley, CA: 258–275.
Wiseman, T.P. (1982): Poets and Patrons in Late Republican Rome, in Gold, B. (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome*. Austin, TX: 28–49.
Wistrand, E. (1964): Archilochus and Horace, in *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique*, vol. X *Archiloque*. Geneve: 257–287.
Zetzel, J. (1982): The Poetics of Patronage in the Late First Century B.C., in Gold, B. (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome*. Austin, TX: 87–102.